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Study Skills: Concept, Professors Awareness and Needed Research

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Abstract: The concept of study skills and the factors related to it, such as motivation and self-efficacy and their impact on students achievement has been much discussed in the last 3 decades. This study has 2 purposes: The first is to overview the concept of study skills, its importance, its nature and professors awareness of study skills. The second purpose is to examine study skills studies conducted in Jordan.

Key words: Study skills, motivation, self-efficacy, integrated study skills instruction, professors awareness, students performance, Jordan

INTRODUCTION

One of the main goals of the educational system in Jordan is enhancing quality of the learning out comes. In order to reach this goal, students at all grades must possess good study skills. Those are learning strategies which enable individuals to become independent and long-life learners. What is common at schools and universities that teachers and professors do not care much about students study skills? Schools teachers consider that empowering students with study skills is not a part of their responsibilities; meanwhile professors assume that college students possessed required study skills for academic success when they were students at schools. But unfortunately, it is not the case. Indeed, many educators expect students to acquire study skills on their own. Research, however indicates that this expectation is unlikely to be fulfilled and that academically unsuccessful students typically continue to use ineffective study strategies (Diekhoff *et al*., 1982).

If there is to be increased emphasis on independent learning in higher education, it is essential that students are carefully prepared for that independence. Students are currently dissatisfied with the help provided by higher education institutions in preparing them for the study skills they need (Wall *et al*., 1991). Many students at colleges face difficulties when they begin to take lectures notes or write academic essays. Rose (2013) pointed out in an essay that teaching also include monitoring students notes and helping them to develop these notes and working with them on separating out a big idea from specific facts and training them to ask a question without looking dummy. He elaborated, it is not enough for students who need help in study skills to send them to tutoring centers and other campus resources, instead of that professors should forge connections with these resources but realize that they, too can provide guidance tricks of the trade-like taking notes, as well as an orientation to their field. Mike Rose added that students at flagship universities and elite colleges could, also benefit from this approach to instruction. He ends his call for that approach by the following words: Doing such things does not mean abandoning the subject area but rather enhancing it and opening a door to it. This study aimed to investigate to which extent the educational research in Jordan devoted attention to professors awareness about study skills topic.

STUDY SKILLS

Merriam-Webster Inc. (2007) defines study skills, as the application of the mental faculties to the acquisition of knowledge. Study skills is learning how to learn (Cottrell, 2001).

Study skills are the techniques and strategies that help a person read or listen for specific purposes with the intent to remember (Harris and Hodges, 1995).

Study strategies/skills require intensive reading and thinking; the more complex the strategy, the deeper the processing will be. If several tactics or behaviors need to be used, more energy is expended. For instance to study, one needs to read the information and repeat the reading via note-taking, highlighting, mapping or other means of learning the information. Then, one needs to organize that information by schematizing it and decide how the information applies to the learning goal, perhaps by generating questions and linking answers from the organized notations. All during this time of study, the learner must be planning, monitoring and assessing how the study is progressing and when to alter a tactic for more effective and efficient study to occur (Richardson *et al*., 2010).

A distinction between study tactics and study skill strategies has been developed by Lenz *et al.* (1996), they describe study tactics as a sequence of steps or procedures, such as reading, memorizing and taking an exam. Study strategy is the overall approach to selecting the best tactics for a task. It is a comprehensive approach which includes planning, implementing and evaluating study behavior.

Study skills encompass a wide range of behaviors that students can perform before, during and after learning to help them retain and apply information presented in the classroom or at home.

Preparing to learn: Personal discipline, self-management, organizational skills, positive attitude toward studying and the ability to self-monitor are study skills that help students with preparing to learn.

Processing and retaining what has been learned: Note-taking, outlining, listening, learning information from a text and library reference skills are study skills that help students with how do learners acquire knowledge.

Demonstrating and applying what has been learned: Remembering or retrieving information from memory, test-taking skills and demonstrating understanding orally or through writing are study skills that help students with applying knowledge (EMSTAC, 2001).

Some well-known memory aids include story orconceptmaps and mnemonics. A concept or story map organizes the information in a story or text such as character, setting, major events and theme-to help students focus on the important elements. If students write a concept map for every story they read, they are more likely to remember those stories. Eventually, most students will be able to identify the elements of a story while they read, without much reflection. Study skills also include critical thinking skills and the ability to employ logic to solve problems (Devine, 1981).

IMPORTANCE OF STUDY SKILLS

Several research studies have shown a consistent positive relationship between study skills and academic success (Zimmerman, 1998; Gettinger and Seibert, 2002; Richardson *et al*., 2010).

To Gall *et al.* (1990), today many educators accept that teaching learning and therefore, developing studying skills are as much important as teaching traditional courses.

Study skills can provide students with a beneficial study environment, self management, reduce stress and anxiety in preparing for test, as well as more traditional skills of effective listening, reading comprehension, note taking and writing skills. Students who have developed good study skills are more likely to experience an increase in their feelings of competence and confidence as they teach (Elliot *et al*., 2000). Study skills have an important role not just for academic learning but also for everyday life. They can help individuals be organized and successful life long learners and manage their jobs, households and finances (EMSTAC, 2001).

Research shows that students who are strategic learners, for example who know there are multiple ways to do things have increased self-esteem become more responsible, improve completion and accuracy of their work and are more engaged in learning, also improving their performance (Beckman, 2002).

Students who have difficulty in college frequently have inadequate study habits that affect their academic achievement. A central problem, he noted was that many of these students had not learned how to take effective notes and manage time for studying (Butcofsky, 1971).

Purdue and Hattie (1999), after analyzing 52 studies about outcomes of and relations between study skills, concluded that when students learn effective study behaviors and incorporate them into a meaningful approach to learning, they experience academic and affective results.

According to Elliot and Wendling (1966), 75% of students who are academic underachievers have poor study habits and examination techniques.

Mastery of study skills in reading, writing and Mathematics helps enhance students academic abilities (Devine, 1981). The lack of these skills can negatively impact academic achievement. Haynes (1993) reports that improving study skills techniques can enhance academic achievement for students with poor study skills habits. According to Slate *et al.* (1998), recent investigations have found a significant lack of study skills among both high school students and college students in baccalaureate degree programs.

NATURE OF STUDY SKILLS

Many people think that students with good study skills are clever students but this is not always true. Cottrell (1999) stated that student do not have to be clever to acquire good study skills. He elaborates study skills evolve and mature through practice, trial and error, feedback from others and reflection.

Second characteristic of study skills, there is no unique study skill technique that fits all students. As

students have different learning styles they, also differ with the study skills techniques which are suitable for them. Some students are mostly visual or auditory or kinesthetic. Cottrell (2003) suggested that students should give explicit attention to a wide variety of study skills techniques. The aim would be to identify those that suit them best as individuals and to capitalize on those techniques that work particularly well for them. Third, study skills are correlated to the conscious of students. Students must have a degree of conscious reflection on how well their own thought processes are working for them.

Anderson (2002) describes study skills as processes of meta-cognition which is self-awareness of one's thinking and learning. Learners who are able to step back and monitor their thinking and learning are able to use strategies for finding out or figuring out what they need to do. These strategies help students organize, process and use information effectively (Kerka, 2007). Fourth, having good study skills is related to self-efficacy. Research has shown that just as confidence in one's ability to learn promotes learning, lack of such confidence inhibits learning. Students who use study skills effectively are more likely to believe that they can learn. Therefore, they are more likely to be successful (Kerka, 2007). Fifth, study skills are transferable skills. When study skills are developed, individuals can use them in different situations. Cottrell (1999) discussed current personal sub-skills, such as observation, selection and concern for others may be transferable to academic skills and that academic skills may later be transferable to employment.

SOME MAIN FACTORS INTERACT WITH STUDY SKILLS

Research results pointed out that study skills interact with some factors which make study skills more clear concept to deal with most related factors to study skills will be presented in the following part.

MOTIVATION

Since learning study skills are learning experiences, motivation to study effectively is essential. By actively developing good study skills and learning strategies students will keep their motivation high and achieve their goals much more easily and more efficiently. From a psychological perspective, study skills refers to the learning and motivation strategies considered essential to being successful in college. Their importance is underscored by the fact that academic tasks at the college level tend to demand far more high-level thinking and independent learning than those encountered in secondary school (Tuckman, 2003).

Differences in academic achievement are usually referred to the existence of differences in students motivation to study. Students must be motivated to study and to be engaged in effective study behaviors which lead to academic success (Covington, 2000).

David McClelland went to suggest that if students use strategies to increase their motivation; their academic achievement will subsequently improve (Tuckman, 2003).

Raffini (1988) proposes a 4-fold approach that would remove motivational barriers and help students redirect their behaviors away from failure-avoiding activities toward academic applications. He describes how these 4 strategies can aid in promoting the rediscovery of an interest in learning:

- Individual goal-setting structures allow students to define their own criteria for success
- Outcome-based instruction and evaluation make it possible for slower students to experience success without having to compete with faster students
- Attribution retraining can help apathetic students view failure, as a lack of effort rather than a lack of ability
- Cooperative learning activities help students realize that personal effort can contribute to group as well as individual goals

As McCombs notes, motivating learning is largely dependent on helping to bring out and develop students natural motivations and tendencies to learn rather than fixing them or giving them something they lack. There are some ways of incorporating methods of motivation into courses and connecting with students already existing natural desire to succeed:

- Define course goals and help students think about personal learning goals
- Make use of students interests and background knowledge
- Show the relevance of material
- Teach students skills for independent learning
- Give helpful and frequent feedback (James, 1998)

Due to Zumbrunn *et al.* (2011), Corno stated that self-motivation occurs when a learner independently uses one or more strategies to keep themselves on-track toward a learning goal. It is important to the process of

self-regulation because it requires learners to assume control over their learning. Furthermore, Zimmerman revealed that self-motivation occurs in the absence of external rewards or incentives and can, therefore be a strong indicator that a learner is becoming more autonomous. Also according to Zumbrunn *et al.* (2011), Walters stated that students by establishing their own learning goals and finding motivation from within to make progress toward those goals, they are more likely to persist through difficult learning tasks and often find the learning process more gratifying. Teachers and parents so as to help students to be self-motivated must understand and be able to assess the key self-believes and processes of motivation, such as goal setting, self-efficacy perceptions and academic values (Zimmerman, 1998).

SELF-EFFICACY

Self-efficacy refers to learners beliefs about their ability to accomplish certain tasks. Self-efficacy is concerned with judgments of how well one can execute courses of action required to deal with prospective situations (Bandura, 1982).

Academic self-efficacy is one's confidence in their personal ability to accomplish academic task. Bandura (1993) stated a person with the same knowledge and skills may perform poorly, adequately or extraordinarily on depending on fluctuations in self-efficacy thinking.

Many researchers stated that there is an obvious interaction between self-efficacy and study behavior. Students with high self-efficacy usually use effective study skills; however students who have low self-efficacy generally choose and employ inappropriate study skills. There are 4 sources of self-efficacy. Teachers can use strategies to build self-efficacy in various ways.

Mastery experiences: Students successful experiences boost self-efficacy while failures erode it. This is the most robust source of self-efficacy.

Vicarious experience: Observing a peer succeed at a task can strengthen beliefs in one's own abilities.

Verbal persuasion: Teachers can boost self-efficacy with credible communication and feedback to guide the student, through the task or motivate them to make their best effort.

Emotional state: A positive mood can boost one's beliefs in self-efficacy while anxiety can undermine it. A certain level of emotional stimulation can create an energizing feeling that can contribute to strong performances. Teachers can help by reducing stressful situations and lowering anxiety surrounding events like exams or presentations.

Here, are some tips suggested by Margolis and McCabe (2006) to improve self-efficacy for struggling students. Teachers are advised to do the following:

Use moderately-difficult tasks: If the task is too easy will be boring or embarrassing and may communicate the feeling that the teacher doubts their abilities; a too-difficult task will re-enforce low self-efficacy. The target for difficulty is slightly above the students current ability level.

Use peer models: Students can learn by watching a peer succeed at a task. Peers may be drawn from groups as defined by gender, ethnicity, social circles, interests, achievement level, clothing or age.

Teach specific learning strategies: Give students a concrete plan of attack for working on an assignment rather than simply turning them loose. This may apply to overall study skills, such as preparing for an exam or to a specific assignment or project.

Capitalize on students interests: Tie the course material or concepts to student interests such as sports, pop culture, movies or technology.

Allow students to make their own choices: Set up some areas of the course that allow students to make their own decisions, such as with flexible grading, assignment options or self-determined due dates.

Encourage students to try: Give them consistent, credible and specific encouragement, such as you can do this. We have set up an outline for how to write a lab report and a schedule for what to do each week-now follow the plan and you will be successful.

Give frequent, focused feedback: Giving praise and encouragement is very important, however it must be credible. Use praise when earned and avoid hyperbole. When giving feedback on student performance, compare to past performances by the same student, do not make comparisons between students.

Encourage accurate attributions: Help students understand that they do not fail because they are dumb; they fail because they did not follow instructions, they did not spend enough time on the task or they did not follow through on the learning strategy.

By focusing on self-efficacy and using the strategies presented, here teachers can help struggling learners develop a more accurate, optimistic, can do attitude. By helping them replace the destructive pattern of low self-efficacy perceptions that cause maladaptive academic behaviors, avoidance of courses and careers and diminishing school interest and achievement, teachers can set students on a more productive and satisfying life path: Beliefs of personal competence ultimately become habits of thinking that serve students throughout their lives. And this is the ultimate responsibility of teachers.

Are professors aware of study skills? According to the National Commission on Excellence in Education (1983), many students are unsuccessful in school because they lack effective study skills. To counter this, the commission recommends that study skills be introduced to students very early in the schooling process and continue throughout a student's educational career. It has been argued that study skills should be taught at the high school level because many high school students are deficient in reading, thinking and study skills (Tonjes and Zintz, 1981).

Wingate (2006) argues that the widespread approach to enhancing student learning through separate study skills courses is ineffective and that learning how to study effectively at university cannot be separated from subject content and the process of learning.

Thus, classroom teachers must be involved in the development of study skills. Integrated study skills instruction, across the curriculum is most highly recommend because it calls for the teaching of study skills by the classroom teachers in the content of the actual subject matter that is being taught (Dodd and Shaughnessy, 1988). Hattie *et al*. (1996) has indicated the following main findings of study skills teaching:

Conventional study skills teaching: Study skills have often been taught as a separate and discrete topic. This is not the best way but it works pretty well, adding up to a grade to students performance. Techniques, such as skim reading, note taking, essay planning and so on are taught one at a time and independently, without regard to context. This approach works best for younger learners and not at all well for adults.

Teaching study skills in context: It is to integrate study skills teaching into the subject teaching using subject specific material and tasks.

It is best to use tasks that are real, embedded and subject specific. For example, teach essay planning while they are writing a real essay for their course or teach note taking by looking at the notes they have made in a real lesson.

Furthermore, there is evidence that integrated study skills instruction does improve academic performance. Meta-cognition is a notable feature of all successful studies that has been founded. Meta-cognition is students thinking about their learning and self-regulating their own learning. For example, students reflecting about the way they work and so setting themselves goals for improvement, then evaluating how this went (Hattie *et al*., 1996). According to Lea and Street (1998), many tutors may not be aware that students difficulties with academic tasks often stem from epistemological assumptions rather than from a lack of techniques. Raising this awareness would help tutors to recognize their essential role in developing students deeper understanding of knowledge. Without professors who are equipped to teach study skills, study skills instruction in core content classrooms it will never become a regular practice and students will likely continue to approach their academics with an underdeveloped set of study skills. Furthermore, research in Jordan demonstrates the need to develop study skills.

Study skills research conducted in Jordan: A sample of studies which manipulate study skills topic will be presented. These studies give an idea about the notions related to study skills that researchers in Jordan, concentrate on.

Al-Qatawneh (2012) investigated the effect of the concept-based Curriculum and Instruction Model (CBI) on promoting the motivation of the Jordanian 10th graders in learning English as a foreign language. The participants of the study consisted of 56 female 10th grade students. The participants were assigned into 2 groups, experimental and control and were assigned to the levels of treatment. The study employed a 34 item Course Interest Survey (CIS). The CIS was administrated to the participants before and after the 8 week treatment. The results of the study showed a statistically significant difference on the motivation measure at ($p<0.05$) between the mean scores of the 2 groups on the CIS measure in favor of the experimental group. The results validated the theoretical assumption that learners motivation correlates with curriculum and instruction design.

In another study Jafar (2012), detected the attitudes and motives of university students in Jordan towards learning English within the current status of the Arab world. A questionnaire was administered on 610 of students at the Middle East University for both MA and BA students in the academic year 2010/2011. Data analysis revealed that attitudes of students were neutral

for both levels. Cultural motives were preferable by both levels while the instrumental and academic motives were neutral. There was no significant difference on the academic domain related to the level with a significant difference between them on the instrumental and cultural domains. There was no significant difference related to the specialty on the academic domain with a significant difference between them on the instrumental and cultural domains. No significant difference appeared on the academic domain related to the school of graduation with a significant difference on the instrumental and cultural domains.

Further, Bataineh and Alazzi (2009) discovered themes or concepts, generated from the collected data that formed building blocks of grounded theory in the study of secondary school social studies teachers perspectives. School social studies teachers were interviewed regarding their perspectives of teaching critical thinking skills in their classrooms. All interviews were audio-taped in Arabic and later translated into English. Data, including the translation of the audio, video tapes, the ministry of education guidelines and textbook teacher manuals were analyzed qualitatively.

The study results indicated that Jordanian secondary school social studies teachers are not familiar with the definition and teaching strategies of critical thinking; the Jordan ministry of education guidelines did not require teachers to teach critical thinking. In addition, teacher manuals for the state-required textbooks provide only detailed content information with only minor references to teaching critical thinking.

In another study, AL-Omari *et al.* (2012) determined the reality of the practices of the faculty members of teaching skills in light of comprehensive quality standards from the viewpoint of Balqa applied university college students. To achieve the objective of the study the researchers designed a questionnaire included four axes on quality standards in teaching. The study found out that the teachers of these colleges have skills associated with qualities of teaching methods, strategies, teaching techniques, interaction, communication and evaluation. But, they are poor if some special skills like the inability to diversify in the initialization methods to lecture in various ways, does not possess the ability to provide feedback to students answers.

In addition, Ihmeideh *et al.* (2010) determined the positive and negative attitudes among 289 students of class teachers and childhood teachers disciplines using the Communication Skills Attitude Scale (CSAS) in Jordanian public universities. GPA, year level of students was recorded. Overall results of study revealed that the mean of positive attitude score was 4.03. The mean of negative attitude scale score was 3.63. There were no significant differences between class teachers and childhood teachers students in their positive and negative attitudes toward communication skills. Students with grade point averages 2 and more have positive attitudes toward communication skills than students with grade point average <2. Senior students have high positive and less negative attitudes toward communication skills than sophomore and junior students.

In another study, Abu-Moghli *et al.* (2005) determined Jordanian nursing students perception of their learning styles. Total 420 nursing students enrolled in 4 universities offering a baccalaureate degree in nursing at the time of the research project were approached. A structured self-administered questionnaire developed by the researchers was used for data collection. The results of the study revealed that the majority of Jordanian nursing students perceived themselves as independent learners. The vast majority of students indicated that they have a desire to learn new things are curious to learn and can identify their goal independently. However, a low percentage of students indicated having good study skills, ability to concentrate while studying and using their study time efficiently. The 2-tailed t-test indicated no significant differences at α 0.05 levels between students learning preferences and the selected demographic variables.

In addition Al-Alwan and Mahasneh (2011), investigated the relationship between reading self-efficacy and using reading strategies of university students. The sample consisted of 398 male and female students in the Hashemite University in Zarka, Jordan. To collect the data, 2 scales were used including a scale of reading self-efficacy and a scale of reading strategies. In order to answer the questions of the study, the means standard deviations, 2 way ANOVA (2×4) and correlation coefficients were computed. The results of the study revealed that the level of reading self-efficacy of university students was moderate. Also, results of the study revealed that the most frequent use of reading strategies was found to be cognitive strategy, followed by metacognitive strategy and then followed by compensation strategy. In addition, the results revealed that there is a statistically significant difference in reading self-efficacy and using reading strategies due to academic level. In addition, the results of the study revealed that reading self-efficacy was significantly positively related to the use reading strategies.

In another study, Al-Masaeed (2011) found out the relationship between the scientific thinking skills and general self-efficiency for undergraduate student at Al-al-Bayt University according to a academic level, sex.

The sample consist of 255 students randomly selected. The 2 tools were used: The scientific thinking and general self-efficiency scale. ANOVA and correlation coefficient were performed to find the relationship among variables of the study. The result indicated that there is appositive relationship between S.T and G.S.E. It was also found that there are differences at (α 0.05) between juniors and seniors students in favor of the seniors. But, the results showed there are no differences between males and females.

Abuameerh and Al Saudi (2012), discovered the relationship between achievement motivation and secondary school students achievement at Salt City in Jordan. The study sample included 441 students (210 male, 231 females). The study found that student's achievement motivation was high with regard to the major dimensions taken by this study which are students having a goal to achieve and persistence. On the other hand, results revealed student's motivation towards the dimension of ambition was weak. Results further showed that there were significant differences in students achievement motivation due to academic achievement; students who passed showed more motivation rather than students who failed. Also, results showed there were no significant differences in students achievement motivation due to sex.

Ababneh (2013) identified the relationship between EFL female students motivation and learning the English language. The study investigated 2 types of motivation: Internal and external. The study sample consisted of 102 English majored female students at Yarmouk University, Jordan. A 2 section questionnaire was used for data collection.

The findings showed that the subjects are internally motivated for learning the English language. And there was a positive relationship between students internal motivation and their proficiency in English as a foreign language. On the other hand, data for the students external motivation revealed that there was a counterproductive relationship between external motivation and proficiency in learning English.

CONCLUSION

Based on the revision of the studies mentioned in the previous study, it is obvious that study skills are practices related to motivation, self-efficacy and influence academic achievement. However, much of the past studies tried to investigate the effect of motivation, self-efficacy on study skills and little attention has been given to the investigate to which degree do professors are aware about the concept of study skills and if they teach study skills while teaching subject matter. The review of literature for this study did not revealed any study that investigate the relationship between professors awareness of study skills concept, their practices about teaching study skills, their practices to enhance students motivation and self-efficacy and academic achievement. So, there is a need for studies to investigate the relationship between professors awareness of study skills concept, their practices about teaching study skills and other aspects related to it and academic achievement.

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